

REPORT WRITING

**FEAFFA-EARA TRAINING
MODULE FOR C&F CERTIFICATE**

OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course you will be able to:

- Define a report
- State functions and uses of a report
- Identify the different components of a report
- Prepare a report
- Identify the structure and format of reports

Definition of a report

- A report is an exercise in persuasion
- It is a means by which detailed knowledge is transmitted to those who need it
- A report is a structured written presentation which gives:
 - A response to specific formal request
 - An account of something
 - An answer to a problem

Definition of a report

- A report defines a subject or problem, gathers facts in order to present them as completely as possible, and analyses the facts in order to come to conclusions on which the writer bases certain recommendations

Report writing process

- Identify your audience: when you know your audience, you will be able to:
 - Write more persuasively
 - Know their expectations
 - Organise your message to address their needs
- Define your purpose: set objectives
- Collect your ideas: take notes, evaluate available information, arrange it into a coherent whole

Report writing process

- Select the material and decide how to show the significance of the report:
 - Ensure each idea supports your main objective
 - Decide if the information is relevant
- Structure your ideas
 - Organise information into logical blocks
 - Create a logical flow

Functions and types of reports

The task of a report is to present a case. Reports are such as:

- Interdepartmental memos
- Monthly management report
- Regular budget report
- Reports to internal committees

A report must be:

- Persuasive
- Decisive
- Action oriented

Structure and format of reports

There are two categories of reports:

- Research reports
 - Aim, method applied, results and conclusions
- 'Information' only reports
 - Updates
 - Memos
 - Regular reports

Components of a formal business report

- Title page
- Acknowledgement
- Abstract/executive summary
- Table of contents
- Introduction
- Discussion/findings
- Conclusions
- Recommendations
- Appendices
- References
- Bibliography
- Index

Title page

- Company name and logo
- Title: the biggest and boldest element
- Reference number
- Author's name
- Subject and number
- Date of submission

Executive summary

Concise summary of the essential elements of the report

- Purpose
- Scope
- Main points
- Conclusions
- Recommendations

Executive summary

- Independent (can be read on its own)
- Comprehensive (covers all main points)
- Clear and concise
- Short, only 10-15% of the report, not more than one side of a page
- Written in full sentences and paragraphs

Table of contents

- Introduction
- Discussion
- Conclusion
- Recommendations
- bibliography

Introduction

- States purpose, assumptions, main argument and structure of the report
- Explains why the report is necessary

Discussion

- Main body of the report
- Headings clearly identify the content
- Details main argument
- Incorporates relevant theory
- Well referenced

Conclusions

- Drawn from evidence, interpretation and evaluation presented in the discussion
- No new material introduced
- Follows logically from the discussion
- Conclusions section should give:
 - Key points
 - Not just another executive summary

Recommendations

- Suggestions for possible actions based on the research
- Recommendations to business community or the relevant groups as appropriate

Checking

Check each section as you finish. Read the whole report in one go. Mark any passages that need attention. Ensure that the report is:

- **Clear:** does what you want it to say
- **Concise:** well expressed
- **Complete:** covers all information
- **Correct:** all figures and facts are accurate

Effective report writing

For a report to be effective, it must be:

- Appropriate to its purpose and audience
- Accurate
- Logical
- Clear and concise
- Well organised with clear section headings
- Layout: displays the shape of your thoughts

Effective report writing

- Display section and page numbers clearly
- Number pages throughout
- Use a new page for each new section
- Indent sub-sections
- Emphasise headings and sub-headings in a consistent way
- Use wide margins
- Double spacing is helpful
- Justify the report to make it look neat

Style

- Effective white space
 - Blank line between paragraphs
 - Bullet points where appropriate
 - Left-justified or blocked
 - Font, font size & margins
- Easy to read
 - Clear, concise language
 - Short sentences

Style

- Correct grammar and spelling
- Pitch at an appropriate level: not everyone knows what you intend to communicate
- Use concrete examples that support your argument
- Coherent
 - Obvious signposts guide your reader through the report

Style

- Follow a logical sequence
- Number system for main reading e.g. 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and so on
- Cohesive
 - Every sentence should support your objective
 - Topic sentences introduce a paragraph's main idea

Style

- Effective paragraphs

Place information where it will be seen

- First and last paragraphs
- First and last sentences

Keep paragraphs simple

- Short
- Each paragraph should contain one main point

Style

- Spread the load
 - Not all your ideas should come at once
 - Spend time noting initial ideas and set the document aside
 - When you come back to it later, you will find that your ideas have fallen into place and you can see the way ahead more clearly

Questions

1. You are the manager in Africa Clearing & Forwarding LTD. Recently a new staff was recruited. He received training in clearing and forwarding through correspondence. Whereas he has demonstrated good knowledge of this business he lacks experience. He urgently needs to be briefed on report writing skills. Before the employee is assigned any duties you have been asked by your General Manager to induct him on report writing. Not that by the end of the session the new staff must be able to write both research and information-only reports